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EDITORIAL

This edition of the *Journal* is a good example of the work that goes on at the International Baptist Theological Seminary; two of the major contributions arise from conferences sponsored by IBTS. In August 2002 an excellent conference took place on Baptists and Eastern Orthodoxy. Dr Tim Grass, an associate lecturer at Spurgeon's College, London, and editor of a recent book, *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, published by Paternoster Press, gave two papers at the conference. One was an introduction to the Doctrine of the Church in Orthodoxy and the other, published in this volume, was on Tradition. The subject of Orthodox relationships with evangelicals was dealt with at the conference by a leading Orthodox theologian involved in ecumenical affairs, Fr Vladimir Federov, from St Petersburg. There were three well-qualified speakers from Romania, Dr Emil Bartos, Dr Octavian Baban and Dr Oti Bunaciu. Dr David Hilborn, Theological Adviser to the Evangelical Alliance, also gave a paper. These papers will be brought together in a book to be published by IBTS later this year.

Another conference was held last year at IBTS on the Practice of Ministry in the contemporary world, and this has provoked further discussion among some of the leading conference participants. The discussion, included in this issue, is a fine example of the way in which fresh and relevant thinking comes into focus when – as IBTS seeks to do – it is possible to bring together thinkers and practitioners from the West and from Eastern Europe.

A new initiative at IBTS has been the development of the seminary as an eco-seminary. The article by Mgr Petra Zivnustkova in this issue offers some of the thinking behind this development. As well as being Kvestor at IBTS, Petra lectures on environmental issues. During November 2002 a series of events at IBTS gave prominence to environmental questions. These events are described elsewhere in this issue.

Finally, we are pleased to carry a stimulating and challenging article from Dr Nigel G Wright, the Principal of Spurgeon's College, on the crucial topic 'Religious Abuse: The precarious potential of religious believing'. This was a paper delivered to a BWA audience and we are delighted to be able to carry it in *JEBS* so that it can provoke further thought.

With this issue of *JEBS*, I hand over my role of Director of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at IBTS to the Revd Toivo Pilli from Estonia.

The Revd Dr Ian M Randall
Senior Research Fellow, IBTS

RELIGIOUS ABUSE: THE PRECARIOUS POTENTIAL OF RELIGIOUS BELIEVING¹

Introduction

On September 11 2001 the world, we are told, changed. In a massive and unprecedented act of terrorism the lives of some 3000 completely innocent people were brought to an abrupt end. They came from many nations and encompassed a variety of religious faiths. Their immediate 'crime' was to have been present on a particular day in a particular place. Their larger 'crime' was to have been part of a Western, free market system deemed by their aggressors to have been exploitative and demonic. The consequences of the act of terrorism continue. The pain and suffering caused by the loss of lives will live on in the minds of others closely, or not so closely, involved who will suffer distress, trauma and illness as a consequence. It will be remembered and re-experienced 50 and 60 years hence by children bereaved of their parents. In other ways the personal cost of this terrorism will be borne by those caught up in the economic fall-out from the event itself. There will be many simple, ordinary people whose security in retirement, worked for over generations, will be jeopardised. From a very different angle, there have also been equally innocent lives of equally simple and ordinary people brought to an end, albeit unintentionally, in the Allied action in Afghanistan.

September 11 2001 represents an immensely successful terrorist action which must have exceeded even the wildest hopes and expectations of its perpetrators. It was a masterpiece of planning and skill and was not without its own perverse kind of heroism as young men sacrificed their lives to bring it off. It remains a cruel and vicious act. At one level it raises no new theological questions since Christian theology espouses a doctrine of human depravity in tension with its doctrine of the divine image in humanity. We are not unused to human atrocity. It has often been associated with the rejection of Christian faith. We see it in the Terror that followed on from the French Revolution, in the death camps that were the product of Nazi ideology, in the gulags that were spawned by Stalin's brand of communism. What is, however, new, or at least what comes to us with new force and should be the subject of extensive reflection, is that September 11 was apparently the product of a devout religious faith.

¹ The paper was originally delivered and discussed at the opening session of the Christian Ethics Commission of the Baptist World Alliance General Council Meeting in Seville, July 09, 2002. It was responded to by Dr Parush R Parushev, the Director of Applied Theology of IBTS, Prague.

The religious resonances are extensive. Here were people who had a sense of mission, a sense of overwhelming constraint. Here were people who had a belief in God and understood themselves to be serving the will of God. Here were people who had identified an enemy, and saw it in the capitalist systems of the Western world, most of all in the American Satan - against which they saw themselves engaged in jihad, waging a holy war. Here were people who had a martyr's commitment to the cause, willing to lay down their lives for the things in which they believed. And here were people who had a hope in a life to come, believing that martyrdom would be followed by automatic entry to Paradise. If the reports are to be believed, the name of God was on their lips at the last. What they did was done within the framework of a religious faith and commitment. They set out to change the world and have succeeded abundantly.

Christian responses

How do we respond to this? An immediate response would be to see in these events the ancient hostility between Islam and Christianity. Christian evaluations of Islam differ, and Islam itself is as diverse as Christianity, but one interpretation of this religion is to see it as a counterfeit which sets itself both against the Judaism to which it looks as an ancestor and against the Christianity which it has persistently sought to displace as a rival. Beneath the events of September 11 we are to discern therefore something other than mere terrorism: it is a religious conflict, a holy war, a clash of two religious visions.

It comes as a surprise to those of us who see the West as highly secularised to realise that even its secularism is a Christian secularism. Underlying the Western approach to society and state there is a religious undergirding which has produced democratically free societies and a sense of the difference between church and state. Although the Christian faith lays claim on the whole of life, it does so in a way that recognises that church and state are incommensurate; they operate in different ways, the state having the power of coercion and the church possessing only that of persuasion. Viewed eschatologically, although the church works persistently to influence the state for good, it recognises that only in the *eschaton*, at the end, will 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ'. In the interim the state will of necessity fall short of full conformity to the will of God. It belongs to the realm of the fallen which, though it can be improved upon, will only be truly redeemed by the coming of the kingdom of God in its completeness. Another way to put this is to say that Christians, at least in their Free Church variation, do not believe in a religious state, that is, a state wedded to one religious

ideology and enforcing its agenda. Islam, on the other hand believes precisely in a religious state and subordinates the secular power to the religious power of the mullahs and teachers of Islam. My contention therefore is that at the root of the present conflict there are indeed religious and theological motifs and that the present conflict cannot be entirely analysed in terms of economic or political power, however much these two will be part of the total mix.

One of the effects of September 11 has been to remind the West that religion cannot be relegated to the realm of private opinion in the way that the liberal orthodoxies would like to do. It will not allow itself to be treated in this way. Professor Jonathan Clark of the University of Kansas wrote an article in a leading British newspaper on November 6 2001 headed 'Despite the denials, this war is rooted in religion'². His argument is that while political leaders rush to affirm that the conflict is not religious in nature this is precisely what it is. The date of this article is a significant one but may be lost on non-British readers. November 5 is the day on which Britons remember - with bonfires and fireworks - the Gun Powder Plot of 1605 when a group of Catholics associated with Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament. Their religious stance was accompanied by a political stance to do with the claims of the papacy to political as well as religious dominance across Europe. Conversely the Protestant faith was associated with the right of the British people to be free from foreign domination. Against those who define British society as essentially multi-cultural, he argues that 'Osama bin Laden reminds Post-Modern Britons [presumably at this point he could have referred to any Western people] that theirs is an indelibly Christian country rather than an historical "community of communities"'. The religious underpinning of these societies still shapes them decisively even in an age of religious decline.

Theological ideas concerning the community of faith have their mirror image in political ideas concerning the civil community. In this way Baptist concepts of the church have readily found their counterpart in the notion of a plural, democratic and free society. Today's secular societies are apt to take the political arrangement offered to them and neglect or even deny its theological roots. Clark's point is that although as we deconstruct September 11 we may do so in language that liberal orthodoxies can cope with, using terms such as 'power' and 'oppression', these are shallow unless they reckon with the religious dimension. Equally, the long-term solution to these conflicts must be a religious solution as much as an economic and political one. This in turn, according to Clark, calls for Islam

² *The Times*, November 6 2001

to grow into maturity in a way parallel to the growth within Christianity, which led away from religious warring between Catholics and Calvinists.

The drift of what I have outlined so far suggests an interpretation of September 11 which sees it as a characteristic act of a counterfeit religion carried through in the name of a God who is to be distinguished from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way Christians might distance themselves from any association with it and justly claim that they themselves are the intended victims. In turn this interpretation might lead them to support and legitimate the kind of response which is itself a war, indeed a 'crusade' (and the word was used unwisely early on in the unfolding events) against a deceived and distorting religion. To the religious legitimisation of the act of terrorism there is therefore added an equally religious legitimisation of violent and destructive response. It becomes God's will to strike back. If the appeal to God's will as the original justification for terrorism is to be criticised we must also subject to scrutiny the use of such language to justify a violent response.

A wider critique

Some have seized upon the events of September 11 to launch an attack not just on Islam but on all religion, Christianity included. In an article published on September 15 2001³ a leading and militant British atheist, Richard Dawkins, professor of the public understanding of science at the University of Oxford, wrote these words:

Our leaders have described the recent atrocity with the customary cliché: mindless cowardice. 'Mindless' may be a suitable word for the vandalising of a telephone box. It is not helpful for understanding what hit New York on September 11. These people were not mindless and they were certainly not cowards. On the contrary, they had sufficiently effective minds braced with an insane courage, and it would pay us mightily to understand where that courage came from. It came from religion. Religion is also, of course, the underlying source of the divisiveness in the Middle East which motivated the use of this deadly weapon in the first place ... To fill a world with religion, or religions of the Abrahamic kind, is like littering the streets with loaded guns. Do not be surprised if they are used.

Here Dawkins extends the tirade. It is all the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) that are implicated in this event. Christianity is as culpable as Islam and as liable to be used for ill. The specific teaching he has in mind is that of the after-life:

³ *The Guardian*, September 15 2001.

If death is final, a rational agent can be expected to value his life highly and be reluctant to risk it. This makes the world a safer place, just as a plane is safer if its hijacker wants to survive. At the other extreme, if a significant number of people convince themselves, or are convinced by their priests, that a martyr's death is equivalent to pressing the hyperspace button and zooming through a wormhole to another universe, it can make the world a very dangerous place.

It would be a useful exercise to engage with Dawkins' article and construct a Christian response to it. It would be possible to point to the wholesale slaughter that has ensued when the Christian faith has been rejected. It would be effective to point to the ways in which atheistic or Christ-rejecting ideologies have in the twentieth century alone been responsible for mass slaughter and dehumanisation on an unprecedented scale. No doubt he would want to exculpate himself by arguing that that is not his kind of atheism. And it is precisely this strategy that Christians wish to adopt in claiming that abusive religion is not their kind of religion. What we must come to terms with, however, is the fact that religious language in general and Christian language in particular has been used from time to time to give legitimacy to acts and behaviours that can only be described as abusive and destructive. Christian failure at this point leaves the Christian testimony open to those who would denigrate it.

This year's Whitbread Award for literature has been awarded to Philip Pullman in recognition of his trilogy *His Dark Materials*. Pullman self-confessedly sets out to destroy Christianity and to liberate the world from any faith in a personal God. The God Pullman attacks is 'God, the Creator, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father' and rather perniciously 'The Authority'. In these books, designed for children and brilliantly written, we learn about 'God who is not a loving God seeking people's good but their enslavement, and we learn more about the Church that serves him which is not a channel of love and a protector of children but a self-serving, bigoted, malevolent and murderous exploiter of them'⁴. Whenever the church uses its theology as a cloak for unethical behaviour or abusive religion it adds fuel to this kind of caricature. This is true in the present and it is true historically. It is true, for example, when abusers use their position as priests and figures of religious authority to exploit others for sexual gratification. It was pleasing to hear some of the immediate Baptist responses to September 11 emanating from the United States. People were asking not only, what is wrong with these people that they do this, but what is it about us that makes people hate us like this? Or, what have we done that brings this judgement upon us? In themselves these are good questions. And if we are to address the ethical challenge of September

⁴ Mark Greene in *Christianity and Renewal* (April 2002), p.70.

11 for ourselves, the question we must pose is, are there ways in which we use our heritage of Christian believing, or the Scriptures that are given to us, as resources for legitimating our tendencies to abuse? Do we do this individually, and do we do this nationally by the misappropriation of theological thinking and speaking?

Harmful Religion

The title for this paper is taken from a book published in 1997 and edited by Lawrence Osborn and Andrew Walker⁵. *Harmful Religion* identifies a variety of ways in which religion can be observed to become abusive. It happens when overbearing practices of pastoral care (sometimes called ‘shepherding’) claim a degree of control over people that deprives them of their freedom and therefore of their dignity. Shepherds are equated with God and therefore to be absolutely obeyed. It happens when deliverance ministry, whose proper role is to set people free from evil influences, is used to identify people whose behaviour is simply problematic, or non-conformist, as demon-possessed. It happens when healing ministries become a means of pushing sick people further into the mire when they inconveniently have insufficient faith to be healed. It happens when charismatic individuals use their charisma to extract money and adoration from the religiously gullible and the sensation seekers. It happens when the strong sense that God wills something of us becomes an excuse for overriding issues of common courtesy, decency or honesty. It happens when religious communities become so enclosed and inward-looking that the whims of their charismatic leaders are treated as Holy Writ. It happens when men quote the Scriptures to assert their domination over women for selfish ends. It happens when political correctness becomes a fundamentalism with which to beat people and a form of mind control to edit out other voices from the conversation. It happens when power struggles within denominations are cloaked with theological language to disguise what they really are – desires for dominance. The precarious potential for the unethical misuse of religious believing is, apparently, enormous.

It is commonplace to deny that true Christianity is in any sense a religion. Following the lead of Karl Barth, many would see God’s self-revelation in Christ as God’s judgement upon and abolition of ‘religion’. Religion is unbelief, indeed the most elaborate of human attempts to hide from God to avoid acknowledging our inability before him, or to seek to

⁵ *Harmful Religion: An Exploration of Religious Abuse* (London: SPCK, 1997)

reconcile him to us by our own efforts⁶. It is possible however to overlook the subtlety of Barth's position which is captured in the German word *Aufhebung*. This word means 'abolition' but also contains the suggestion of 'taking up' something. God's revelation abolishes religion as unbelief but then takes the elements of religion up into itself to establish, by grace, a true religion which is a divinely-enabled response to revelation. At many points in the modern world, religion constitutes a threat to human society, a potential source of division and conflict which sets up absolute loyalties. The news reports bear this out on a regular basis, whether it be a proclamation of religious *fatwah* against a novelist deemed blasphemous towards Islam; a millenarian sect immolating its members when threatened by the FBI; a doomsday Buddhist cult allegedly releasing deadly poison in the Tokyo underground; a government building being blown up by an apocalyptic survivalist group; or Christian or Muslim exorcists found guilty of gross physical abuse and even manslaughter after applying medieval methods to their victim-clients. All such incidents involve the taking to an extreme of concerns, images or themes which are common to the religious enterprise as a whole. Furthermore, a map of the world's trouble-spots since World War 2 would reveal how armed conflict frequently occurs where diverse religious traditions encounter each other: Hindu-Muslim, Jewish-Muslim, Christian-Muslim or even, within religions, competing versions of the same faith. For British people Northern Ireland is the most obvious and immediate instance. Religious loyalties contribute significantly to conflict.

The answer to this perennial problem cannot be to dispense with religion. For one thing, this is an impossibility. The religions of the world may individually wax and wane but they are here to stay for the foreseeable future. The Western perception of the decline of traditional religion is illusory since, in global terms, Islam, Judaism and Christianity have actually experienced various forms of resurgence throughout the last century⁷. Religion will function as a determining social force in shaping the future. Even when traditional religions orientated towards the transcendent are discounted, we are not free of religion. Secular religions or ideologies, such as ideological feminism or environmentalism, take their place and reproduce the features of the religious mindset, often at its worst. Atheism is perfectly able to take on religious overtones, as we see in North Korea, and to prove every bit as intolerant and persecutory as religion at its worst. Secularism can be as dogmatic and sectarian as religion itself. The antidote to false religion is not no religion but true religion.

⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume 1/2: The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956), pp. 297-325.

⁷ G. Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994).

It is my firm belief that Baptists have within their tradition the basic stuff of a non-abusive religion. It is there in the respect for the freedom of the individual. If Christ has set us free for freedom, then whatever diminishes this freedom is to be resisted. This is a humane doctrine which resists the use of coercion or force and which prizes the free response and responsibility of the person. Its corresponding virtue at the corporate level is religious liberty, the freedom to let people explore spiritual truth and values without the threat of discrimination or oppression hanging over them. Baptists have understood that neither church nor state stand in the place of God. It is God who elects and persuades, who convinces and converts and where the church or the state act as if this is something in their own gift they usurp the power and authority of God. Such beliefs do not commit us to muting our own convictions but to pursuing them all the more vigorously by means of argument and persuasion within an open debate in which ideas are contested.

Using and Misusing the Bible

This rich potential does not mean however that we are invulnerable to temptation or that we are incapable of using our beliefs and our Scriptures illegitimately. The very commitment to the Bible that is at the centre of our testimony, as it is for the whole Christian church, opens up the possibilities of justifying the unjustifiable. It ought to trouble every reader of the Bible that genocide is prescribed in its pages as the way in which Israel was to deal with the Canaanites. We might find ways of justifying this historically by saying that the Canaanites had become so evil that their eradication was equivalent to the removal of a malignant tumour. We might argue that this was a once for all event authorised by God who alone is able to judge these things, an event which can never be a mandate for other places or times. We might even argue that the relevant episodes have been heightened and overstated for theological and didactic reasons as a way of warning the people of Israel not to compromise with Canaanite practices but to cut them out radically. But the fact remains that some who read the Bible and claim it as their authority have used them, and others may yet use them again, as a justification by an appeal to an authority for what could never be justified as Christian or indeed humane behaviour.

Similarly, from the Middle East at the moment the phenomenon of suicide bombing is provoking debate in the West about its moral status: does the willingness to lay down one's own life in a cause mean that such acts are morally superior to those of people who kill while taking care to preserve their own lives? The discussion might once more appeal to the Bible. Perhaps Samson could be appealed to as the original suicide bomber, for here is a terrorist who is also a hero and an archetype. Samson pulls

down the pillars of the house upon his Philistine enemies, so that 'the dead he slew at his death were more than he slew in his life'. This is an act of which God, apparently, approves. Can it be appealed to, therefore, to justify such acts today - and if not why not? We need to face the fact that just as the Devil can quote Scripture for his own ends so can Christians. In the process they can persuade themselves and others that their misinterpretation of Scripture is backed by the authority of God. This is the precarious potential of having an authoritative text.

Charting a Course

We have wallowed in the difficulties for long enough and we need to begin to extract ourselves from them. I offer various ingredients for helping us at this point.

Firstly, the Bible needs to be read by a responsible interpreting community. The church of Christ is a 'hermeneutical community', a community, that is, of believing people who live from and for the faith to which the Bible bears testimony and to which it is the primary, normative and authoritative witness. The Bible comes to life as its Word is heard and heard again. The church is a hermeneutical community as it is an 'acoustic community', living by listening to and hearing the Word of God. In this vocation we cannot avoid the call to responsibility. Since the Bible can be interpreted in various ways we have the responsibility to interpret it in that way which most effectively and faithfully captures its intention and its direction. This means not misusing it for our own self-interested ends. Scholars have long pointed us to the 'hermeneutic of suspicion', that approach to biblical interpretation which is sensitive to issues of power and self-interest in the reading of the Bible. We all have the tendency to interpret the Bible in the way that suits our vested interests most conveniently, that sees in it what we want to see in it. In my opinion this is an acute observation. We read the Bible against other people and for ourselves. This is irresponsible Bible-reading. I read it first of all to be brought into judgement by its Word in order that I might then be liberated by its Word. Judgement begins with the household of God. When we read the Bible in any other way we are responsible before God for its misuse.

Secondly, we read the Bible with an organising centre and that centre is Jesus Christ. This is not to deny that the Word of God is to be heard in all the Scriptures. It is. But the Bible is a book of promise and fulfillment, or preparation and realisation. The Hebrew Scriptures look forward to One who is to come. The Greek Scriptures look back to One who has come. As the incarnation, and not just the inscripturation, of the Word of God, Christ is the wisdom and the key through which the whole is to be interpreted.

The Christ who is the key is not one of human invention but precisely the One to whom the Scriptures bear testimony. At this point the hermeneutics of suspicion need to be complemented by a hermeneutic of trust: the knowledge of Christ is accessible to us and he will be a true witness and a safe guide. The responsible community tests its interpretation of Scripture according to whether it conforms to Christ – whether it can stand scrutiny in the light of the one who is the Light of the World.

It needs to be said here that there is no authority higher than the Christ. It would be a mistake therefore in our interpretation of the moral demand of Scripture to make any other principle higher than him, to enthrone, for instance human rights or ‘equality’ as the supreme criterion. That would be to say that we need to go beyond Christ for something morally higher and this we cannot do. However, there is a further point that strikes a balance for us here.

Thirdly, Christians are to fashion their responsible, Christ-centred behaving in dialogue with other ethical traditions. Although we are unable to acknowledge any authority to be higher than Christ we remain fallible people, still subject to the hermeneutic of suspicion. For this reason we ourselves do well to submit ourselves and our moral reasoning to scrutiny. We do this for the sake of clearer and more faithful understanding of the ‘truth that is in Jesus’, believing that questioning and contest may be a stimulus to a clearer perception of what it means to be faithful to him whom we follow. In these ways we seek to avoid our discipleship of Christ ever becoming harmful religion.

The Revd Dr Nigel G Wright is Principal of Spurgeon’s College, London, and President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2002-3. He is the chair of the Baptist World Alliance’s Commission on Christian Ethics. He is the author of a number of books including *Disavowing Constantine* (Paternoster Press, 2000) and, most recently, *New Baptists, New Agenda* (Paternoster, 2002).

The Rector of IBTS has been pleased to appoint the Revd Dr Ian M Randall as a Senior Research Fellow of IBTS in recognition of his outstanding contribution to theological education in Europe

CARE FOR CREATION

When the disastrous flooding hit central Europe no-one could imagine the consequences. Towns, cities and tiny villages found themselves in a similarly tragic situation. It did not matter whether they were Hungarian, German, Austrian, Russian or Czech. Water was stronger than bridges, houses and fences, and afterwards mud covered everything that had been flooded. Did human activity cause this disaster? Will the future bring more disastrous happenings like this? Will they be more common? Christian experts on the environment are not sure. I want to look here at Christian responsibility for the environment.

Protecting the world

In the 20th century the right to a healthy environment has come to be regarded as one of the basic human rights. People should have clean air, water, nutrition and an environment that will not cause them harm. This includes the right to be protected from pollution, smog, noise, vibration, radiation and the effects of global warming. The United Nations Environment Protection Committee is preparing reports on current developments and the future of our earth. Every second year they publish a prognosis for another fifty years called 'Global environmental perspective'. They expect that in 2050 the population will have increased by 50% compared to today; that is about 9.5 billion people. Agricultural production will need to be doubled and industrial production will need to be four times greater than it is today.

Though developed countries will live more energy-efficiently, the non-developed countries, in order to catch up, will use more energy and therefore energy consumption will be higher. For example, in 2050 China will use as much energy as the USA and Canada today, and South Asia will consume more energy than China itself. This presents great challenges.

It is estimated that twice as much nuclear energy will be consumed and in non-developed countries three times more than today. Therefore, more than at any other time, there were great hopes for the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. What actually came out of it is much less than what was achieved in Rio de Janeiro. 103 Prime Ministers, Monarchs and Presidents were able to say little that was meaningful about the environment. What was offered were largely empty proclamations. This led many people to the conclusion that when it comes to the state of the environment they can do nothing to protect the world and achieve change. They might be able to elect

representatives who will be members of pro-green parties but otherwise the world lies in the hands of big corporations and international treaties. This, I would argue, is not true, and everyone should be aware of it. The future of this world does not lie with our politicians and their relationship to the international corporations. The world is able to protect itself.

As hard as people are trying to destroy nature, to the same extent the world is protecting itself. Even without the Kjøto protocol the world will survive. Oh that the politicians who went to the UN summit could see what we are doing with the environment. They met in a beautiful hotel, with air-conditioning, ate caviar, duck livers, salmon and steaks. Do they know that in the future there will probably be no such food, or if it is available only the richest in the world will be able to afford it? The future that the world is preparing for us means that only strong and well equipped animals and plants will survive – rabbits, rats, pigeons and such like. The harm being done to the environment does not mean that the world will disappear suddenly, but unless we protect it there could be centuries in which people live in a world that is very inferior to the environment we know now.

Affirming creation

Why should we try to protect the world? John 3, 16 says: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'. If people believe that Jesus came only to save human beings then they may well act selfishly. Jesus came to save the whole world. Its beautiful nature is described in so many places in the Bible. In the beginning God introduces the natural world, and at the same time the Creation of that world introduces the Creator God. And the world was created as God intended it. This view is underlined in Jesus' teaching and ministry and other places in the New Testament. God is the one who 'makes his sun rise' and 'sends rain' on the earth (Matt. 5:45, cf. 6:28-29), who 'gives the growth' to things that are 'planted' and 'watered' (1 Cor. 3:6-8), who 'feeds the birds of the air' (Matt. 6:26) and sees to it that 'not one sparrow falls to the ground' unnoticed (Matt. 10:29), and who 'supplies seed to the sower and bread for food' (2 Cor. 9:10). And in the parabolic language of the New Testament, God is portrayed in numerous 'caretaker' roles vis-à-vis the earth.¹

It is evident that God's creation permeated the culture and thinking of the biblical peoples. They lived closer to the land than many in urban society today. But for such modern urban societies, the natural world still provides a dwelling place, life-support, and a vocation. The natural world

¹ Calvin Redekop, *Creation and the Environment, An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

also serves as teacher, model and inspiration. Yet, we are neglecting the environment, an environment that is so important to us, and we are fouling our life-support systems. Few scriptures deal directly with the environmental issues we presently face. There is no passage that says: 'Go forth and save the earth'. It is not that simple. The earth, to the writers of the Bible, was not lost. The people were lost, not the earth. People needed to be saved, and God made provision for this with the coming of Christ.

Today we need to give fresh attention to affirming creation. The warning signals of environmental distress have triggered action on the part of caring individuals. The environmental movement has brought together people of varied philosophies to, for example, recycle goods, save animals, and clean beaches. Where does the Christian faith fit in? What does Christianity offer that is different? What role should Christians take in earth stewardship?

The answers lie in the foundations of the Christian faith. God was first revealed to humans through the natural world. This primary understanding gives Christians a particular stake in the continuing existence of the earth and its creatures. In addition, the first thing God said to Adam and Eve was essentially: 'Here is the earth. Take care of it'.

This is a serious charge to humanity that has not been withdrawn. In Psalm 8, 6-10, the Psalmist is surprised by the great possibilities of humans and how God lets humans rule the earth – and the responsibility of humans towards God is emphasised. Not a single animal was granted so many powers and rights as humans were. We should affirm this responsibility given by the Creator.

A desire for change

People are using and exploiting the natural resources of the world. A big part of modern industry is based on exploiting a variety of resources – carbon, iron, petrol, gas, metals, timber, land (agriculture), fish etc. The rain forests probably include half of all animals and living organisms in the world. Today's tropical forests are just half of their original size. If the speed with which the timber and agricultural industries are cutting down trees continues then, within 50 years, the forests will all be gone. It took the earth a long time to produce these resources and we could use them all up within the next 100 years. We do not only exploit natural resources, we also use them, and emissions are causing pollution that is producing climate change.

So, there is a desire for change. There are two solutions offered that could perhaps save us and nature. The first one is to go backwards, to stop

using natural resources as we do now through our current agricultural and industrial policies. But this is not a practical solution. Why? Today there are six times more people than 200 years ago and three times more than 50 years ago. This world cannot exist without intensive agriculture and modern transportation and supplies. Most people in the highly developed world cannot imagine how to live without washing machines, freezers, fridges, cars, heating, TV etc. All this allows us to live in a comfortable way, and most of people see this as freedom. People living in non-developed countries hope to reach the same level of comfort one day. So to step back is impossible: no one would support it.

Can we adjust the environment? One senior officer in the US government once wrote: 'We cannot change our lifestyle because of climate change, so we have to adjust the biosphere'. It sounds like a joke, but it shows the thinking of many people. If there is a problem, our technology and scientists will find some way to solve it. But this may well prove impossible.

Here is another way to achieve change – the way of faith. It is a common view that science and Christianity, or any other religious faith, are not compatible. Science seeks to describe the universe, its origins and its mechanisms. But no scientist can answer the question – who created the universe? They can tell us how it all works but do not know who or what started the process of creation. And this is the question which faith answers. Johannus Kepler, an astronomer of the 16th century, commented that 'scientists think according to God's ideas', which means the mechanisms that science is disclosing to us are God's mechanisms. God created a perfect world. Everything fits and everything has its own purpose and existence. The more we learn about it the more we have to believe that only God could create this!

Taking care of the earth on behalf of God is a very powerful image and an important task. If we fail to do so we know what follows – disaster. But in Genesis we can read that God is our partner – Genesis 3:8 speaks of 'God walking in the garden'. God is a caring partner, who cares for all that he has made; and also a teaching partner, who can show us how to achieve change.

Sustainable development

The way forward, I would argue, is by sustainable development. The idea of sustainable development is not that we have to stop any growth. It means that we should try to foster clean growth. Growth in terms of each family having its own house and two cars is unsustainable – imagine what would happen if every Chinese person demanded this. Growth in terms of quality

and the changing of human values, and the correction of those values, is sustainable.

Is it therefore necessary to change the philosophical-ethical base of our society? Western society, historically, is based on Christianity. Because of the problems we face, should Christianity be replaced by another religion? Is Christianity, as some of the experts say, the reason for the current ecological crisis? No, it is the opposite. Abandoning the values of Christianity is a cause of the crisis. Abandoning God's orders is what changed Western society. Christians have to go back to their roots, and become God's stewards and protectors of his Creation. They need to affirm the importance of creation from the Bible. This is a challenge to Christians everywhere in the world. It also seems to be a utopian call. I believe we can achieve it, at least on a small scale. Ronald Preston's² method can be of help to us. The method has three stages:

1. Identify the problem. This means a negative judgement on the status quo. Christians have a radical faith. They are taught not to be satisfied with things as they are but to desire change.
2. Get at the facts by searching for the relevant evidence from those involved in the problem, whether as expert witnesses or as people experiencing it personally.
3. Try to arrive at a broad consensus on what should be done – first of all at a middle level. This indicates a general policy direction to aim for.

It is a constant struggle for Christians to explain the theology of creation and why Christians should be responsible for the environment. To illustrate: Dr Martien E. Brinkman, in his attempt to explain the theology of creation and to explain its problems and obstacles wrote: 'When God created the World, he called: ... let's hope it will work!'³ I believe we can see that God's original creation has worked. But destructive development has taken place. Let us hope that because of the nature of Christianity, a way of life based on love, Christians have something unique to offer the environment. The outreach of faith unquestionably includes a ministry to a suffering earth, a ministry in which we express joy and praise for what God has made and through which we care for his creation.

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² The Revd Canon Professor Ronald H Preston, quoted in Council of Churches for Britain & Ireland, *Unemployment and the Future of Work – An Enquiry for the Churches*, 1997.

³ Peter C A Moree and Tomas Trusina, *EMAN 2001* (Samenspraak, 2001)

BIBLE, CHURCH AND TRADITION IN THE 16th CENTURY REFORMATION¹

Introduction

Today, Evangelicals often say that the Bible alone is our authority in faith and practice. It is claimed that tradition has no authority in our churches. We sometimes hear the Reformation described as a contest of Scripture versus tradition. That understanding is applied to our view of other Christian communions today, especially Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy: we condemn them because they acknowledge tradition as having a certain authority, and the result (we believe) has been that the teaching of Scripture has been obscured or distorted. In consequence, much modern Evangelicalism, especially in the West, rejects the authority of Church and Tradition; it tends to assume that the individual reader, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is therefore capable of understanding the Bible without any human assistance. It is not surprising, therefore, that Orthodox and Roman Catholic writers accuse us of individualism, of believing that individual Christians have no need of the Church or of the tradition of Christian theology.

But I want us to think again about our attitude to Tradition, because I believe that it is not the attitude of most of the 16th-century Reformers. What did the Reformers say about the authority of the Bible and its relationship to Tradition? What was their understanding of the relationship of these to the Church? How does the Spirit work to bring understanding of Scripture? Why did they produce so many catechisms and confessions of faith? I do not claim originality for the exposition of 16th-century thought here. Neither do I claim originality for much of the contemporary application, but I hope that it may provoke us as we seek to listen to the Scriptures speaking in and to church life today. First of all, I shall attempt to clarify the meaning of the phrase *sola Scriptura*, and then I intend to examine the way in which Bible, Church and Tradition were inter-related in the various 16th-century Western approaches to theology. Finally, I want to offer some pointers towards an understanding of how we should see these as related today. Although I am not engaging with the thinking of other Christian traditions today directly, clarifying our own understanding of Tradition as Evangelicals is bound to be helpful preparation for encounter with those Christians who give Tradition a high place.

¹ An earlier version of this lecture, delivered at Emmanuel University, Oradea, Romania, is due to be published by that institution in its journal, *Perichoresis*.

1. ‘*Sola Scriptura*’?

The humanist movement had stressed the need for scholars to return to the writers of classical antiquity for intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual inspiration. For theologians of the 16th century, this meant a return to the Bible and to the earliest Christian writings, those of the Patristic period. Reformational theology took over this emphasis and developed it, providing a rationale for placing the Bible in a unique position of authority. For the Reformers, Scripture possessed an inherent authority as divinely-revealed, a truth which was brought home to the believer by the witness of the Holy Spirit; thus their approach differed from late-medieval Catholicism, which taught that the authority of the Scriptures was guaranteed by that of the Church. Accordingly, theology needed to return to Scripture as its primary source and supreme authority, since it was deviation from this which had resulted in the errors prevalent in late-medieval Roman theology.

All other sources of Christian teaching were to be subject to correction in the light of Scripture, whether Fathers, Councils, theologians or popes. The Magisterial Reformers (those, such as Luther and Calvin, who retained the medieval concepts of a Christian society and a territorial church, and so believed that the state should aid the process of reform) still valued the theological tradition of the Church, often appealing to the earlier and more authentic tradition of the Fathers and the early Councils over against later distortions of the tradition seen in the medieval church; but they held that this tradition must be seen as always open to further reform (*semper reformanda*).

This concept of Scripture as supremely authoritative is what is meant by the Latin phrase *sola Scriptura*, one of the four famous slogans summarising Reformational theology, the others being *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), and *solo Christo* (through Christ alone). As far as I know, the phrase was not used by the Reformers themselves, but such a view of Scripture certainly underlay all the development which took place in particular doctrines, such as soteriology or ecclesiology. So we must stress that 16th-century Protestant thinking about Scripture reflects not only a particular concept of what Scripture is, but also a different way of doing theology from that of Rome or Orthodoxy.

Today, Evangelicals and their critics alike frequently misunderstand *sola Scriptura* as teaching that Scripture is the only authority for faith and practice. In fact, we have already explained that what Lutheran and Reformed theologians intended to say was that Scripture is the supreme authority, or, to use another word, the final authority. This is because it

represented God speaking. There were other authorities – the teaching of the Fathers and the Councils, the Church, the ministry (and especially the preaching of the word by the minister), confessions of faith and so on. But all these authorities were seen as subordinate to Scripture; they were not God-breathed, as Scripture was, and they derived their authority from that of the word of God.

Related to the concept of Scripture as supreme authority is the concept of the sufficiency of Scripture. When Reformation theologians spoke of the ‘sufficiency’ of Scripture, they meant that the Bible contained within it all that we need to know in order to be saved. Usually this was qualified by the assertion that some things were stated explicitly, while others, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, were necessary deductions from the teaching of Scripture. The *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England (1571) asserted that:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. (Article 6).

It is only fair to note that many Catholic theologians had also affirmed that all we need to know for salvation was to be drawn from Scripture², but their attitude to the Church’s theological tradition was not fundamentally critical in the way that the Protestant Reformers’ attitude was. They did not, on the whole, contemplate the possibility that the tradition itself could have become distorted in the process of handing down, whereas the Reformers insisted that this was exactly what had happened and that the Christian message had been obscured as a result.

To summarise: *sola Scriptura* did not require the total rejection of the authority of the Church or Tradition, but it did mean that these were regarded as subject to correction in the light of Scripture, which contained everything necessary for salvation as the revelation of God. We shall now look more closely at the relationship between Bible, Church and Tradition, keeping in mind the role played by the Holy Spirit.

2. Bible, Church and Tradition

1. Roman

While the idea of an extra-scriptural tradition whose content related to church practice, such as the form of the liturgy, originated very early in

² For a discussion of this, see Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.148-51.

church history, later medieval theologians began to think of this tradition as also containing material relating to belief.

Previously, Scripture had been seen as containing all Christian doctrine, but needing authoritative interpretation, which was provided by the Church as it drew upon Tradition. The content of Tradition was seen as coinciding with that of Scripture: Scripture was sufficient in terms of its content, but required an authoritative interpreter, through whom the Holy Spirit gave understanding.

However, as doctrine developed, it became increasingly difficult to find scriptural support for everything. From the 14th century, a new approach appeared, which was used to justify those beliefs which could not claim scriptural legitimation, such as the immaculate conception of Mary (the belief that she was conceived without the stain of original sin so that Christ could be born of her without himself being tainted by original sin). Lane suggests that this view arose because the Church's practice in worship, the *lex orandi*, became the basis on which certain doctrines were put forward, the *lex credendi*.³ Thus the idea of the immaculate conception of Mary arose out of the Church's worship practices, which represented part of Tradition. So now there were two sources for doctrine – written Scripture and unwritten tradition.

Another late-medieval approach regarded the Spirit speaking through the Church as the ultimate authority, which validated both Scripture and the Church's theological tradition. This view originated during the later medieval period, and it seems to have been the approach adopted by the Council of Trent.⁴ Trent asserted that the gospel was 'the source both of all saving truth and rules of conduct'.⁵ These were contained in 'the written books and the unwritten traditions'. Tradition was seen as having been dictated by Christ or the Spirit, just as Scripture had been, and handed down in the Church from one generation to the next. Both Scripture and Tradition were handed down and authoritatively interpreted by the Church. The Church now, for the first time, defined the limits of the canon to include the deuterocanonical books, and also the text which alone possessed authority, the Vulgate, so it could be said that for Roman Catholics there was one ultimate source of doctrine: the Church, as guided by the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the Spirit was located, not in the

³ A.N.S. Lane, 'Scripture, Tradition and Church: An Historical Survey', *Vox Evangelica* IX (1975), pp. 40-2.

⁴ There has been considerable ecumenical debate during the last 50 years about the correct interpretation of Trent's teaching on Scripture and Tradition; for a summary of this debate, see A.N.S. Lane, 'Sola Scriptura? Making Sense of a Post-Reformation Slogan', in P.E. Satterthwaite & D.F. Wright (eds.), *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 316-17. Interestingly, this approach is not unlike that found in Orthodoxy.

⁵ *Decree concerning the Canonical Scriptures* (1546).

believer (as the Reformers taught), but in the Church's teaching office. This is evident from the 'Profession of the Tridentine Faith' (1564)⁶, which required Catholic teachers to accept the Church's apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions, and to interpret Scripture according to the Church's teaching.⁷

2. Reformational

We have said that the Reformation represented a return to the supreme authority of Scripture. How did the Reformers expound the New Testament references to Tradition? We may say that they distinguished between two main types of tradition, apostolic and papal. For example, Calvin interprets the reference in 2 Thessalonians 2.15 to include doctrine, the doctrine which Paul had taught the Thessalonians, which he distinguished from the kind of tradition which the papists seek to enjoin upon men, which had no basis in Pauline teaching.⁸

The first type of tradition was the tradition of apostolic doctrine, grounded on Scripture and summarised in the ecumenical creeds.⁹ This was accepted as possessing a legitimate, but subordinate, authority. There was only one source for doctrine – Scripture, 'the only judge, rule, and norm'.¹⁰ However, within the Church there were reliable guides to help believers understand it correctly. At this point we must remind ourselves that the Reformers had been extensively influenced by humanist thought. Humanism sought to return to the ancient sources (*ad fontes*); for theologians, those sources were the Bible and the early Fathers, who were closest to the New Testament age and therefore more valuable than later theologians such as the schoolmen. The humanist movement had therefore encouraged the study of the writings of the early Fathers. The appeal to the Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils was an important element of the approach of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the early Anglicans, but for a different reason. They appealed to the Fathers and the Councils not because of their antiquity, but because these were believed to be in agreement with the teaching of Scripture. As Calvin put it,

⁶ Also known as the 'Creed of the Council of Trent' or the 'Creed of Pope Pius IV'.

⁷ As far as contemporary Catholic theology is concerned, we should note that it is possible to argue for a development of this attitude to tradition emerging in 19th-century Catholicism. In this, the teaching of the church *now*, guided by the Spirit, is what is seen as authoritative, and earlier teaching is interpreted in the light of this. Such an approach has made it easier to give legitimacy to doctrinal developments such as papal infallibility (officially defined in 1870) or the bodily assumption to heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary (defined in 1950).

⁸ J. Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, vol.6, (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1965), pp 411-12.

⁹ *Gallican Confession* (1559), Art.V; *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) Q.23; *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), ch.XVII; *Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. VIII; *Formula of Concord* (1577), 'Epitome', 2.

¹⁰ *Formula of Concord*, 'Epitome', 3.

... although we hold that the Word of God alone lies beyond the sphere of our judgment, and that Fathers and Councils are of authority only in so far as they agree with the rule of the Word, we still give to Councils and Fathers such rank and honour as it is proper for them under Christ to hold.¹¹

Thus, for example, Zwingli and Calvin both accepted the three ancient creeds and the decisions of the first four Ecumenical Councils; the same would be true of 16th-century Anglican theology.

There was a polemical motive, as well as a theological one, behind this: the Reformers sought to demonstrate that their theology was in continuity with that of the Fathers, and that Rome had deviated, and was still deviating, from this tradition.¹² The Reformers acknowledged that the Fathers could serve as guides to interpreting Scripture, but they also insisted that the Fathers themselves expected their teaching to be tested in the light of Scripture.¹³

As well as accepting the ancient creeds, the Reformers also expressed their belief in such a tradition by producing their own confessions. Lutherans, Reformed, Presbyterians and Anglicans all produced confessions of faith – something which they would not have done if they had believed, as some Radical Reformers did, that Scripture was the only authority. These confessions were seen as having a legitimate, though subordinate, authority, because they provided reliable summaries of apostolic doctrine, and especially of the gospel itself (for Luther, the gospel was the Church's treasure and the law-gospel contrast a key to interpretation of Scripture). Such confessions were attempts to meet the need for a universally accepted form of doctrine which could put an end to the bitter theological controversies which affected the various Protestant churches. For the Reformers, this kind of tradition was of value as a witness to the revelation given in Scripture and an aid to understanding it. It did not, in theory, provide the normative interpretation of Scripture any more than the teaching office of the contemporary church did, nor was it a source of additional truth; rather, it was a subordinate authority, a tool to help the contemporary church understand the Scriptures.

The second type of tradition was that which was believed to have been invented by the medieval church and which lacked Scriptural support. Into this category the Reformers placed such practices as pilgrimages and penances, and all non-Scriptural practices laid down as necessary to

¹¹ *Reply to Sadoleto* (1539).

¹² Cf. *Augsburg Confession* (1530), Art. XXII.

¹³ Cf. *Second Helvetic Confession*, ch. II. I should add that acceptance of the principle that the Fathers may be helpful guides in doctrinal matters does not require us to interpret them in the same way that the Reformers did: even Augustine of Hippo was not a 5th-century Protestant.

salvation. The *Augsburg Confession* explains that such traditions obscure the doctrine of salvation through faith, they obscure the commands of God, and they burden consciences.¹⁴ Similarly, Calvin explains that such traditions may represent practices contrary to Scripture, or unknown to Scripture (and thus no part of how God wishes to be worshipped), or they may be good practices insisted upon in a way which Scripture does not do.¹⁵ They displease God and often tend to obscure the teaching of Scripture. Evidently the Reformers went beyond the medieval theologians, because they were prepared to use Scripture to question aspects of the Church's tradition: previously 'apostolic Scripture' and 'apostolic tradition' had been seen as harmonising with each other, whatever the precise understanding of their relationship.¹⁶

For the sake of completeness, we should also mention that the Reformers acknowledged that national churches might formulate their own traditions relating to such matters as the order of worship. Such traditions should be observed for the sake of good order.¹⁷ These, however, were justified by appeal to 1 Corinthians 14.40.

How did the Reformers' view work out in practice? If anyone was an individualist, it was the early Luther or the early Zwingli, confident in their belief that the individual reader could interpret Scripture themselves, a belief founded on the clarity of the Word of God and the illumination of the Spirit. They condemned the Catholic Church for not allowing this. It was said that Scripture is clear, self-interpreting, and therefore it should be possible to achieve unity of understanding. However, events proved that this was an unrealistic hope, as theological disagreements proved impossible to resolve. Furthermore, the initial emphasis on the clarity of Scripture was taken much further than the Reformers wished, as the Radicals attempted to get rid of all tradition and start afresh in their understanding and application of Scripture.¹⁸ Luther was horrified by what he saw among the Radicals, and reacted by insisting on the need for qualified teachers, and authoritative statements of belief, which could guide readers in interpreting Scripture correctly.

Gradually, a tradition of acceptable interpretation was formed; the sufficiency of Scripture was seen as becoming a reality as the Spirit used the Church to open up the Scriptures. This tradition of correct interpretation

¹⁴ *Augsburg Confession*, II.v.

¹⁵ Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 2, (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1972), pp. 156-8 (on Matthew 15.1ff), cf. *Institutes*, 4.10.8.

¹⁶ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 89.

¹⁷ *Augsburg Confession*, II.v; *Genevan Confession* (1536), Art. 17; *Thirty-nine Articles*, Arts. XX, XXXIV; Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 9 (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1960), p. 228 (on 1 Corinthians 11.2).

¹⁸ e.g. Karlstadt and Müntzer at Wittenberg in 1522.

was transmitted through such mechanisms as Zwingli's *Prophezei* in Zurich. This was a conference which took place five times each week, at which a group of young theology students worked through the Bible in Latin, Greek and Hebrew to establish the correct exegesis; one of them would also preach a sermon in German. The congregation would have opportunity to comment on the preacher's handling of the text.¹⁹

As we have noticed, authoritative guides to the interpretation of Scripture also began to appear, in the form of commentaries, confessions and catechisms, but also books such as Calvin's *Institutes*, which were intended as a handbook to help readers to understand the Scriptures (functioning rather like the 2nd-century *regula fidei*). Great stress was laid on the authoritative interpretation of Scripture offered by the Church in the form of its creeds and catechisms, and the preaching of its ministers. The Church and its ministers were expected to expound and uphold the doctrinal standards of the tradition to which it belonged.²⁰

By now, we are probably thinking that there is a tension in the Reformers' thought between the concept of Scripture as the final authority and the authority which in practice was accorded to confessions of faith. The normative status of confessions of faith was harmonised with the *sola Scriptura* principle by positing two types of norm for the Church's belief: Scripture was the *norma normans*, the rule by which all other authorities were measured; confessions were *norma normata*, to be measured against Scripture. In theory, these were functioning merely as aids to the understanding of Scripture, and were subject to criticism and correction in the light of it, a concept which was revolutionary in its potential. However, in practice, the creeds and confessions functioned as authoritative interpreters of Scripture in a similar manner to tradition in Catholicism. Because they were far more detailed than early creeds, they tended to define the faith more narrowly, and perhaps to exercise a deadening effect upon the hermeneutical process.

3. Radical

It is commonly asserted that for most Radical leaders (and here our focus is on the 'Evangelical Radicals', also known as Anabaptists), Tradition had no value as a guide to our understanding of Scripture. Tradition was often regarded not as an authority but as an evidence of decline from the teaching of the New Testament. (Presumably separation from Christendom entailed separation from its tradition, though I do not know how far this was

¹⁹ Zwingli's strong emphasis on the need to understand the original languages led one Anabaptist, the former priest and trained theologian Balthasar Hübmaier, to complain with some justification that the Reformers had replaced the papacy with the rule of trained scholars.

²⁰ Lane, 'Sola Scriptura?', pp. 314-15.

developed in any explicit way.) However, we shall see that this is a one-sided picture, and that even the Anabaptists eventually began to work with some kind of concept of Tradition.

The radicals had no quarrel with the Magisterial belief in Scripture as supreme authority, but their complaint was that the Reformers had not acted consistently with belief in this principle. Indeed, according to the radicals, the Reformers were often more tradition-bound than they realised. Tradition was hindering the Reformers from being consistent with their declared submission to Scripture as the supreme authority. Another hindrance was the Magisterial affirmation of the concept of 'Christendom', in which a territorial church was upheld by the state; in practice, the state often sought greater power over the church, as was the case in Zurich during the introduction of reform in the early 1520s, where the city council seems to have seen itself as the final authority for determining the correct interpretation of Scripture. Reformers would (perhaps unconsciously) have tried to interpret and apply Scripture in a way that was both acceptable to the civil authorities and realistic in that it could be acted upon without overturning the fabric of society.

Infant baptism was a practice which frequently came under radical fire as demonstrating the unscriptural traditionalism of the Magisterial Reformers, and the desperate attempts of theologians to offer a justification for the practice only served to demonstrate to the radicals how tradition-bound the Reformers still were. Luther acknowledged that he retained infant baptism on the basis of Tradition, but Calvin sought to provide it with a Scriptural basis, although it has been pointed out that the attempt to base on Scripture a practice which did not grow up until several centuries after the Scriptures were written, could never be convincing.

Many early Anabaptist leaders had been influenced by humanism. So they recognised the importance of returning to the Scriptures as the best source for understanding what Christians should believe and how they should live. What mattered to them was not interpreting Scripture but obeying it; this has been described as a 'hermeneutic of obedience'. And obeying Scripture meant imitating Christ. This being so, the humblest peasant might possess greater insight into Scripture than the most highly-trained theologian. However, Alister McGrath²¹ goes too far in asserting that the Radicals' approach 'unquestionably' placed the judgement of the individual over that of the Church. It is true that some more individualistic Radicals felt free to reject traditional interpretations of Scripture, either because the Spirit showed them something different or because these interpretations were seen as contrary to reason. Thus the anti-Trinitarians

²¹ Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 146.

emerged, committed to doctrines such as justification by faith, but rejecting the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Nevertheless, the majority of Anabaptists used a hermeneutic which stressed that interpreting the Scriptures is something which believers do together, and that it is in such a context that the Spirit gives light.

And once the body had reached an understanding, that understanding was looked upon as authoritative; thus the *Schleitheim Articles*, emerging from a conference in 1527 which sought unity on a range of contentious issues, asserted that any not walking according to the conclusions laid down should not be allowed into membership. We can see, then, that the consensus of the faithful (at local and inter-congregational levels) served as a guide in interpreting Scripture. When such an approach is adopted, the result is that over time a new tradition is built up, even in traditions which reject the idea of Tradition. This is exactly what happened among many Radical groupings, as may be inferred from the practice among the Hutterites, for instance, of reading sermons from the movement's first century (and in the original high German as well) rather than preaching new ones.

It also appears that some Anabaptists did make explicit use of credal statements. Research has demonstrated that Hübmaier and other South German Anabaptists followed Catholic and Protestant custom in making extensive catechetical use of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed.²² The Hutterite leader Peter Ridemann wrote an influential *Confession of Faith* (1540), which included a lengthy exposition of the Apostles' Creed. Detailed confessions of faith began to be produced by Dutch Mennonites from the late 16th century, an indication of a developing sense that their tradition needed to be safeguarded in this way against the incursion of error. All this means that the widespread modern understanding of Anabaptism as essentially non-credal must be questioned.²³ Indeed, one Anabaptist scholar goes so far as to suggest that Anabaptist theological method was not fundamentally different from that of mainstream Protestants or Catholics: whilst they broke with the existing institutional church, that need not imply a rejection in principle of the legitimacy of Tradition and a sense of history. All that they were doing was to redefine what counted as legitimate tradition, as a result of redefining the nature of the Church.²⁴ This interpretation may be going too far, and much of Dyck's evidence is taken from the 17th and 18th centuries, when the

²² Russell Snyder-Penner, 'The Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed as early Anabaptist texts', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXVIII (1994), pp. 318-35.

²³ Cf. Snyder-Penner, pp. 319-20, 335.

²⁴ Cornelius J. Dyck, 'The Place of Tradition in Dutch Anabaptism', *Church History* 43 (1974), pp. 34-49.

movement had become more established and less radical; however, it does represent a necessary caution against the tendency to assume that Anabaptist theological method was totally different from that on which many of the movement's early leaders had themselves been nurtured. This evidence is particularly significant for those of us who stand in the 'Believers' Church' tradition today.

3. Bible, Church and Tradition today

By this stage, we may be asking whether it is ever possible to achieve a tradition-less approach to Scripture. Indeed, is it right to attempt to do so? Looking at the impact of the stream of biblical scholarship which has consciously cut loose from traditional interpretation of Scripture, we may fairly question whether it is. In the congregational context, claiming to have no tradition can itself become a tradition, one whose effects may be the more restrictive for being unacknowledged.

Here we need to distinguish between two understandings of Tradition. The first refers to those accepted practices and ways of interpreting Scripture which have a history within our churches. The second refers to what might be called 'holy Tradition', something which is in some sense revelatory and not merely the product of human reflection upon the meaning of Scripture. All too often Baptists deny that either exists among them.

Concerning the first of these understandings of tradition, confessions of faith may not be used in many of our churches, but are we guided by accepted, and often unwritten, ways of interpreting Scripture? Even if we claim to reject tradition or human creeds, it is still likely that there is in our churches an accepted way of interpreting the Scriptures. For example, I remember preaching on the parable of the Prodigal Son on one occasion, and being told by a deacon afterwards that what I had said was very interesting, but that it was not the accepted Strict Baptist²⁵ interpretation. If we reflect on our own experience of church life, we see that it is within the Church that a 'tradition' of sound teaching and church practice is handed down to us, by such means as preaching, teaching, and writing, as well as through simply living, working, and praying together as fellow-believers.

And what about the set ways of doing things which every local church has? Often unwritten, new members and visiting preachers are nevertheless expected to conform to these or face congregational disapproval. It seems to me that we would do well to acknowledge that such traditions do exist, and that they play a powerful role in church life.

²⁵ The Strict Baptists are a group of Baptists found mainly in England who are confessionally committed to a five-point Calvinist theology; their roots are in the English Particular Baptist tradition.

Bringing them to the light in this way is the first step in the process of examining them in the light of divine revelation. Some may need to be abandoned; but I think that many would prove, on examination, to be worthy of retention, always provided that they are continually open to review as circumstances change and as our understanding of Scripture grows. In terms of the widely-used distinction between 'Tradition', 'tradition' and traditions, these count as 'traditions'.

But what about the idea of 'holy Tradition' or 'Tradition'? We are unable to follow Orthodox in regarding this as revelatory, although we acknowledge that Scripture itself took shape within the milieu of the early apostolic tradition of reflection upon the gospel. However, we may regard Tradition as something in which the Holy Spirit has been active through the centuries, bringing light upon the Scriptures. There is something of a dialectic between Scripture and Tradition understood in this way, since such tradition is subject to question and correction in the light of Scripture. The challenge for us is to develop a more nuanced understanding of Tradition and its working within our own churches, and of the role of the Holy Spirit in connection with it; this will enable us to dialogue with Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. With this explicitly stated, we shall also be better placed to bring to light and examine the 'traditions' which each local congregation possesses.

We would agree that it is mistaken to do theology without reference to the Scriptures, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the church situation in which God has placed us. (That is a major problem with the dominant model of doing theology in the West – that it pays insufficient attention either to the church context or the Spirit's illumination.) In the same way, I do not think that it is realistic to attempt to do theology without reference to Tradition. We may see the first-century church as a model for us, but we must beware of ignoring the twenty centuries which separate the two. When Protestants have tried to do this, they have often repeated the Christological heresies which appeared during the early Christian centuries, not only as individuals, but also as communities and even as groups of communities. This happened among the 16th-century Radicals; it also happened among 17th-century English Baptists and 19th-century Darbyite Brethren. I believe that this shows that a congregational hermeneutic, while necessary, is inadequate as a preservative against error and needs to be supplemented by a historical perspective, for we are not the only generation to belong to the Church. Evangelicals frequently adopt a negative attitude toward Tradition, but it may help if we try to view it as the voice of those through whom the Spirit has worked in previous generations to bring glory to Christ and understanding of the divine revelation. Since we readily

affirm the gifts of those through whom he works today, this should not present us with any problem.

So we have four elements: Scripture, Tradition, the contemporary church, and the Holy Spirit. Scripture possesses supreme authority because it alone can be described as God-breathed. The canon of Scripture was recognised by the early church, the text of Scripture has been handed down by the Church through the centuries, and the message of Scripture is to be expounded by those so gifted in the Church in each generation. In all these, the Holy Spirit is at work, the same Spirit who inspired the original writings; but Scripture stands above the Church and above the Tradition of interpretation and application, because it is the word of God, the final authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice. I believe that this conviction lies at the heart of the different views of Scripture held in Evangelicalism, Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. For Evangelicals, Scripture is unique in being divinely revealed and therefore stands above all Tradition and above the Church. In defining the limits of the canon, the Church was not giving authority to certain writings, but acknowledging an authority which they already possessed. It is important to note that in Orthodox thinking Scripture is part of a larger body of divinely-revealed Tradition, deriving its authority from God through the Church. The Church decided the canon and in this view only the Church can interpret Scripture reliably.

Perhaps all I can do here is to raise questions rather than offer definitive answers; each of us must relate these questions to our own situations, and these vary across Europe. Some churches may need to recover a sense of the nature and value of Tradition, while in others Tradition risks obscuring the message of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, I believe that with prayer and thought along the lines I have indicated, it should be possible for us to help our congregations grow in their ability to understand, apply and live out the Scriptures, to the glory of God. A clearer appreciation of the role of Tradition and its relationship to the Spirit, the Church and the Scriptures should also assist us in evaluating Orthodox and Catholic theology and practice, and thus in relating to members of these communities.

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THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY IN THE POSTWORLD: What is all this about?

Ministers, educators and other Christian leaders from fifteen countries met at IBTS from 24 to 30 June 2002 to examine together the changing cultural contexts of our world and how ministry is being and may be carried out in the life of the Church and in its witness in society.

IBTS's Director of Applied Theology, Dr Parush Parushev (the conference moderator), and Andrew Jones, director of the Boaz Project in Prague, co-directed the conference, ably assisted by speakers from six countries: Dr Andrew Kirk, Senior Lecturer in Missiology, Department of Theology, University of Birmingham; Dr Miroslav Patalon, Pomorska Pedagogical Academy of Slupsk, Poland; Dr Brian McLaren, well-known author, public speaker and pastor, USA; Mgr Donatas Glodenės, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Justice, Lithuania; Dr Nikolay Nedelchev, Director of the Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute and President of the European Evangelical Alliance, Bulgaria; and Mark Pierson, pastor and co-author of *The Prodigal Project*, New Zealand.

The question was asked: how can we describe the changing world in which Christians are called to minister and witness? While many use the term 'post-modern world', some in the West describe it as the 'post-Christian world', and many Central and Eastern Europeans call it the 'post-communist world'. Dr Brian McLaren vividly described distinguishing characteristics of post-modernity – the emphases on spirituality, pluralism, ecological conservation, dialogue, networking, post-print literacy, and community. How, then, do we respond? The conference examined patterns of biblical discipleship, spirituality and church life in connection with the diverse cultural contexts of post-modern and post-communist societies. Participants also experienced alternative worship, dialogue with artists and thinkers (not always Christians), and heard of innovative efforts to contextualise the gospel in different countries and cultures.

How does this new context affect the ministry of the Church and the witness it is called to bring in the world? Delegates agreed that Christian communities are entrusted with a mandate from the Lord to bring the good news about the Kingdom of God and to invite people to repentance and faith in Christ, leading to responsible discipleship. But in the context of postmodern and postcommunist realities, these communities must seek new ways of communicating the gospel. Delegates from the West were challenged and inspired by the insights from the past twelve years shared

by the younger leaders of Central and Eastern Europe. But deep concern was also expressed that the churches are largely irrelevant to the changing cultural context. Generally they are not reaching intellectuals, professional people, artists, and university students. Nor are they relevant to the social concerns of the younger generations and the impoverished communities of East and West. This created the agenda for the conference.

In addition to plenary sessions, delegates found exciting challenges and ideas for implementation in their ministries during conversations at meals, during breaks, and in discussion periods. They returned to their home countries and churches after worship and thought-provoking reflection, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and ready to apply ideas shared by others actively involved in ministry elsewhere.

At the close of the conference, the team leaders reviewed the discussions. A number agreed to reflect on the challenges, via the internet, by responding to questions formulated by the conference moderator, Parush Parushev. The conversation is set out below:

1. The first task of the conference was to describe the characteristic features of the postmodern cultures in different parts of the world. What are these distinctive characteristics, if any?

Andrew Kirk: I think it is a mistake to speak unequivocally about a post-modern culture. There is no culture which has been completely pervaded by post-modern principles. What we find everywhere in Western societies is a mixture of perspectives, mainly between modern and post-modern outlooks, but sometimes including pre-modern. It would be more accurate, therefore, to say that Western cultures still operate on the basis of the beliefs of modernity, but with some dissent concerning some of these beliefs. In so far as modernity emphasises the rationality associated with the scientific enterprise, namely critical thinking on the basis of the independent assessment of evidence either confirming or denying theories, Western societies are still modern.

There can be little doubt that Western people are happy to depend on science and technology in areas like medicine, communication, travel, labour-saving appliances and amenities. They also approve of the rule of law in the sense of a judicial process which is independent of outside social, political or other influences, and is fair between citizens. They appeal to a notion of universal human rights, which protects the interests of individual citizens, especially the vulnerable, against the arbitrary power of the state. Although somewhat indifferent in practice, most Western people believe in a democratic process of government through universal suffrage, secret ballots, regular accountability, a free press, open protest, the

independent investigation of corruption and a legislature separate from the executive.

All of these commonly taken for granted aspects of contemporary 'liberal' societies are features of modernity. It is, therefore, an exaggeration to presume that the cultures of advanced capitalist states are in a transition to an emerging new culture, whose main features would undermine many of the positive aspects of the life we currently enjoy. Talk of living already in a post-modern culture reflects a decidedly partial analysis of society. Such an analysis seems to spring from either an overstated emphasis on one aspect of culture, often youth culture, or, in religious circles, a concentration on social features, like the increasing, open pursuit of 'spiritual' practices, which appear to soften the hard secularism of recent years.

These clarifications having been made, the modern project has not won universal support in all its aspects. There is evidence of disillusionment regarding some of the claims made for humanity's powers since the 18th century. Perhaps the greatest disenchantment concerns the belief that by unaided reason, allied to scientific methods and technological advance, the perennial problems of humankind can be resolved. Huge gains have been made in medicine, and yet new diseases or new strains of existing ones are prevalent. Human beings, despite exponentially increased information, are just as prone to violence, and other irrational actions, as they ever were. Technological development in the interests of financial profit seems to escape regulation and, as a result, devastates the natural environment and makes the planet a more precarious and dangerous place to live in. There has been a strong criticism of an instrumentalist attitude to nature, allied to disapproval of professional elites who pretend to know what is in the best interests of given sectors of society. Post-modernity may be typified, then, as a prevailing mood of uncertainty towards an unfounded confidence in the power of the mind alone to solve the outstanding questions of existence as humans.

Mirosław Patalon: I believe an important feature is a holistic view of the world and of the personhood. There can be no extremes as solutions for the whole. Totality is seen as the sum of particular stories. On the other hand, reality is seen as fragmented. People live in separated spheres which lack connection between them. I think, though, that in our part of the world (I speak about Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe) we are some years behind the main stream of postmodernity. This is why most of us still feel a strong sense of the purpose of life. The sense of alienation present in western society is only just emerging in eastern Europe.

Donatas Glodenis: I perceive postmodernity as a period in the history of modernity rather than a whole new epoch coming into being. That is the end of modernity, a stagnation period, a period in which we are lost, unable to account for the new data but still not fully into a new paradigm. I think my understanding of postmodernity is different from the one mostly expressed in the conference in that I am trying to put under the postmodern umbrella both the deconstructive and the constructive aspects of the thinking that goes after modernity, while the conference concentrated mostly on the constructive aspect. But for the sake of clarity I will use the concept of postmodernity in the constructive sense also. Therefore 'postmodern' means an approach which offers a way forward, but which is not necessarily the most effective or the most widely appreciated within the current context.

The way I see it, postmodernity is characterised by individualism and distrust of corporate structures in a way that provides new opportunities for non-oppressive intentional community structures; it is a period characterised by the growth of individualistic and also perhaps intentionally communitarian spirituality in contrast to communally expressed religiosity. It is a political rather than scientific reality; words mean less than deeds here.

Brian McLaren: My task was to try to offer some broad overview of postmodern culture in the West. I covered twelve characteristics of modernity that seem to be moving to something new – in postmodernity:

- Conquest/control becomes conservation
- Mechanistic/reductionistic becomes holistic/systemic
- Analytic becomes post-analytic/passionate
- Secular/scientific becomes spiritual/scientific
- Objective becomes intersubjective
- Critical becomes post-critical/collaborative
- Organisational becomes post-organisational, with boundary-less organisations/alliances
- Individualism becomes more oriented to community, tribe, and tradition
- Protestant/polemical becomes post-protestant/spiritual
- Consumerist ... may become super-consumerist, or move toward stewardship
- Print literacy gives way to layered fluency
- National becomes global and migratory

Our Christian ministries must increasingly incarnate our message in the right column – being all things to all people, modern to the moderns, and postmodern to the postmoderns.

Mark Pierson: There can be no universal definition or description of 'postmodern culture'. We may well be able to describe some major shifts in thinking and behaving that have taken place over the last 50 years in Western culture but these characteristics and their outworking will look different in every culture and subculture in which we find ourselves. We also need to distinguish between philosophical and popular understandings of postmodernity. While it may be useful for church leaders to understand what is going on at the philosophical level, that needs to be interpreted at the popular level where most people operate. 'A decline in the power of meta-narratives' is meaningless to most people, but they do understand that the stories they used to think were important to describe how life worked and seemed to be changing, and people no longer agree on them as much as they used to. We need to ask: 'what does this mean for the way I lead worship, preach, structure church life, provide leadership...'. What is important is that we understand and engage with the culture wherever we seek to do ministry and mission.

2. Granted that the formative story of modernity is the idea of the autonomous reasoning self, how can we define the formative story of postmodernity, if there is such?

Andrew Kirk: Postmodernity does not have, in my opinion, any formative story, in a positive sense of purpose or destiny. Rather, it is a mood distinguished by a sceptical attitude towards all grandiose claims made on behalf of any historical process, ideology, religion or intellectual method to understand reality as it is. Its main distinguishing mark is relativism: the view that all beliefs, opinions, customs and practices are relative to particular circumstances and locations. It is imbued with the idea that every claim to truth or knowledge is ultimately a move by the more powerful in a game to impose values or creeds on the less powerful. It extols the notion that every belief is contingent upon accidental historical conditions and, therefore, can only provide a slanted perspective on life.

As a scepticism towards truth and an embracing of relativism are the main traits of post-modernity, confusion reigns with regard to moral values. Following in the constructivist traditions of romanticism and existentialism, post-modernity tends to affirm the positive value of experimentation in personal lifestyles. Given the fact that nothing in life is present already as an absolute, individuals have the freedom to try out modes of living which, in former generations, would have seemed perverse. A variety and multiplicity of experiences appears to be the objective of many people, particularly in the realm of personal relationships, clothes, music, leisure pursuits and food.

It is not coincidental, of course, that the testing of alternatives is made possible by increasing affluence and is aided and abetted by a consumer culture and a powerful and ubiquitous advertising industry. Goods and services, and even identities and personal relationships, are marketed and sold to satisfy and enhance the constructed image of the good life and the fulfilled person. Identities, just like consumer-goods, are manufactured, appropriated, possessed, only to be consumed and replaced. Sexual partnerships are often a matter of experimenting with what is on offer, in the hope of finding something beyond immediate gratification. But, when expectations are dashed, we may repeat what we do with obsolescent goods or acquire a new model.

Zygmund Bauman perceptively likens the post-modern person first to a *nomad*, someone, with no fixed home, always moving from one place to another. Later, however, he describes the same person more accurately as a *vagabond*, for at least the nomad travels with some purpose in mind – that of finding pasture and water for the flocks and herds; whilst for the vagabond, place and time are unimportant. Finally, he uses the metaphor of the *tourist*, the person who travels always to seek new experiences as pure pleasure. In the latter case, the excitement comes in the anticipation of the journey to the dreamt-about, exotic locations, whose image is so cleverly projected by the selling techniques of the glossy brochures. What characterises post-modernity, in distinction to either modernity or pre-modernity, is that there is absolutely no *alpha* and *omega*, no beginning and end to any journey. Life is like a labyrinth to be wandered into and out of at one's disposition. Or, it is like a revolving table that, laden with the delectable things that please the appetites, keeps passing by inviting one to partake.

Mirosław Patalon: Postmodernity would have the conviction that truth is hidden in all the propositions and options. All of them together create an inclusive model of the truth. No exclusive story that eliminates others is acceptable. People are no longer obedient to the universal story that explains everything. Subjectivity is acceptable as a part of objectivity.

Brian McLaren: We may not be able to define the formative story, but it is open to anyone to offer a story and see if it resonates or rings true with hearers. It seems to me that we form this story by looking for patterns in the contemporary culture, by studying history, by looking for trends, and through intuition. As we tell the story, we listen for critique and affirmation, so, over time, our telling of the story can become more accurate and engaging.

We should also expect that there will be other versions of the story. For example, women or minorities or the poor or people of the East will likely tell the story somewhat differently from men or dominant cultures or the privileged or Westerners. If we are wise, I think we will listen to these various stories and try to learn from them all, and use each to improve the fullness of perspective of the others.

Mark Pierson: The formative story of postmodernity is probably that there is no formative story! There are only stories and, in particular, my story. 'This is my truth, tell me yours'.

3. What is the prevalent means and mode of conversing in postmodernity?

Andrew Kirk: Perhaps, reality is not matched by the rhetoric. We are told by a French philosopher that the centrality of the spoken word, which has dominated discourse since ancient Greek civilization, has to be given up. His preference is for the written word, because, as the author is not immediately present to us, we are free to interpret the text as we wish. This view is in stark contrast to the prevailing opinion that with television, cinema and computers, the modern generation has moved from the 'hot' media of the word to the 'cool' media of picture, image and graphics. As in the case of the demise of modernity, however, the passing away of the word is greatly exaggerated.

It is true that encouraging young children to read books is more difficult than it has been in the past. I am not sure that this is due so much to a shift of consciousness as to the greater range of leisure options open to them than previously. Young people (and young adults) spend more time working with computers. At the same time, they spend less time in front of the TV set than a couple of decades ago. In so far as they pass the time playing computer games, they are not communicating with others. In so far as they converse with others, via the screen, they are still using words. Even though the use of language may be limited and the rules of grammar mutilated, chatting via the internet demands the same, usual combination of rational practices as any other linguistic event.

As someone who has been working in tertiary education institutions for a number of years, I am not convinced that the standard norms of critical evaluation – establishing evidence, arguing from premises to conclusions, assessing alternative positions, justifying beliefs, distinguishing between consistent and inconsistent reasoning, etc. – have been abandoned in the university sector. The defence of an alternative way

of learning necessitates the use of the very criteria of rational discourse that it purports to reject.

Mirosław Patalon: Perhaps communication by who we are, not just by what we say. For a Christian, following Jesus first of all in the ethical sphere, not speaking in the language of the church, may be important. This way of seeking conversions means that the role of a Christian is not so much to explain the gospel as a starting point but to be an example of integrity with his or her faith. Becoming a Christian means re-discovering Jesus' model of relating to God and created reality. The crucial aspect of conversion is making constant decisions to follow Christ and therefore it is much more a process than an act (e.g. responding to a call during an evangelistic sermon in one of the church's meetings).

Brian McLaren: Three answers come to mind:

Image: I believe we will see the arts become more and more important in postmodernity, and we in the church will depend more on image and less on proposition to convey our message.

Embodiment: I also believe we will seek to embody our message more fully in our individual and corporate lives. We will want to show as much as to tell. Instead of saying 'Come and listen', we'll say 'Come and see'.

Conversation: I also believe that we will communicate our message less through monologue and more through dialogue, conversation, interaction. Communication will be more of a dance and less of a sales pitch.

Mark Pierson: There are at least three:

Community: Relationships form the basis of any meaningful communication in postmodern culture. Even manufacturers now want a relationship with consumers so they can peddle their products within that relationship. The right to speak has to be earned and based on integrity and not on the shallow commercial relationship of the product peddlers. Belonging precedes believing. It will be through community that most people will come to follow Christ – a community that will carry them and support them and include them from well before they begin to believe.

Visual: Image is almost everything. But image without integrity is nothing. There needs to be something behind the branding and image if it is going to carry meaningful communication. For the Church to simply mimic the culture when it comes to using images and branding will result in spectacular failure.

Reality: People are primarily interested in discovering what works. What works in relationships, child raising, self-fulfilment, weight loss, or the

meaning of life. The postmodern emphasis on the what and how of life needs to be supplemented with some asking about the why as well. That is a major role for the Church.

4. If the return to community is a very important, if not the definitive, part of the 'postmodern' shift, what is then the nature of community?

Andrew Kirk: From my own observation, if the return to community in Western society is a mark of post-modernity, then we still live in a pre-postmodern (or possibly post-postmodern) era. It is widely acknowledged, on the basis of compelling statistics, that the family, as a community of mutually supporting people, is in deep disarray. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of children living with only one parent or with step-parents, step-siblings and half brothers and sisters. Of course, it cannot be assumed that the original family of two parents and 2.5 (average) children ever was a good model of community. But, the ease with which the conventional family breaks down is evidence of the lack of one of the primary features of community life, namely mutual commitment through bad periods as well as good.

Moreover, the separation (or divorce) of parents is usually caused by either unresolved conflict or unfaithfulness, whose consequences are resentment and recrimination. The mode of estrangement often leads to the exclusion of grandparents and other members of one or the other extended family from access to the children, or at least makes it much more complicated and stressful. The general conclusion is that traditional family life has become much more disintegrated than at any other epoch. This does not mean that, at least in theory, alternative family arrangements cannot arise. However, there are few signs that they are any more conducive to regaining some of the essential elements of community life.

A further factor in contemporary living arrangements is the growing number of people who choose to live on their own. Incidental confirmation of this, in the UK, is a lack of suitable and available housing, even though the population is numerically static or declining. The common reason given for this trend is that people (particularly young professionals) want to own and manage their own 'space' as a refuge from a hectic and stressful existence. Even when young people decide to co-habit with a 'partner' on a regular basis, they tend to leave it to a later age than previously. If and when they decide to acknowledge the arrangement in marriage, it is usually after a number of prior liaisons (in the UK, statistically 9 before 30 years of age). These lifestyle choices hardly aid a rediscovery of community.

Perhaps, people find the experience of community in other ways. Young women, for example, often have a small circle of intimate friends with whom they share a lot of their lives. Men, on the other hand, are notoriously less able to build relationships of warmth and confidentiality with their mates, and their relationships can be occasions for exhibitionism. Voluntary societies and clubs proliferate, as people experiment with a huge variety of leisure pursuits. Undoubtedly, some sense of comradeship can be built up in these groups, but it has not been demonstrated that they are providing any greater sense of community than has happened in similar groups in the past.

In that part of Western society that I know reasonably well, I do not perceive evidence for this shift back to community. I wonder whether the claim is not wishful-thinking, designed to cope with the disturbing, counter-evidence that advanced, technologically-sophisticated, consumer societies are becoming ever more fragmented. Where are the indications that people express a deeper, more sustained, less selfish care for one another and commitment to a common goal? There may be some signs of people making common cause in the interests of a worthy enterprise, such as the cancellation of debt of the poor nations, but this is often sporadic, and can hardly be said to amount to a rebirth of community.

Mirosław Patalon: What characterises today's community is the lack of belonging of an individual to a group. One is a member of a particular group only partly and the group never functions as a whole entity. This creates the sense of loneliness. Work is not the centre of a person's purpose in life. People work in order to have the means to express themselves elsewhere.

Donatas Glodenis: I am not sure that a return to community is a necessary outcome of the postmodern process, and this doubt is based on the changes I observe in the religious life of society in Lithuania. Either we are still in a very modern situation, or communitarianism is not a necessary outcome of postmodernism. I think individualism will still hold sway in the postmodern situation, though true community might be something everyone was searching for and unable to find. When we come to consider a way forward for Christian communities, those communities should be voluntary communities, respecting the rights of each individual to participate and to be different. This kind of community does allow diversity, and the binding force of this community is not so much agreement on all issues as a commitment to being the body of Christ in a particular situation, and a commitment to hold the unity by concentrating on integration and dialogue, not on exclusion.

Mark Pierson: I have commented on this in my responses above. I would add that while I agree with what Andrew Kirk says about community, he reflects a very modernist view! I think that postmodern culture shows a deep desire for community and demonstrates this reality in many ways that aren't measurable by traditional yardsticks. Community comes about through internet relationships, by laying a wreath at the spot where the murdered bodies of two 10-year-old girls were found, by the clothes you wear, the music you listen to, the car you drive, and by being part of a tribe of Ecstasy-taking 'ravers'. This may well be considered shallow community, or not community at all, but in postmodern culture this is all there is. This is where meaning is found and some sense is made of life. This is where relationships and support and understanding are shared. It may well be that the locus of community is found in these areas because of the issues that Andrew describes.

5. In the light of the two previous questions, what can we say about the nature of the believing communities in particular?

Andrew Kirk: It is my belief that many Christians have rediscovered the biblical, gospel imperative of community as an ideal. The recent re-emphasis in theological thinking on the Trinity as *communio*, and on the corporate nature of salvation (the salvation of individuals on their own is simply not a belief of the New Testament), has reawakened Christians to the indispensability of community in their discipleship. I believe there is a powerful impulse to find and experience the reality of community. This is being partially fulfilled in the rise of community churches, home fellowship groups, Alpha and Emmaus courses, the use of retreat centres and gatherings for teaching and worship (like Spring Harvest and Greenbelt in the UK). At the same time, it is being made more difficult by the pace of life and other calls on time outside employment.

Effective community presupposes, at the least, a minimum amount of shared time and face-to-face encounter. The notion that meeting together can be squeezed into one or two hours per week, and that, by calling it 'quality' time and making it into an intense kind of encounter, one can pretend thereby to create community is an unrealistic aspiration. Genuine community demands time, for 'loving one another' is not an abstract concept that can happen at a distance, it commits one to deep involvement in the life of others. It may be for this reason that a number of Christians have set up or joined 'intentional' communities, where sharing lives includes financial commitments. Living in the same accommodation, or in very close proximity, sharing activities like meals, regular worship, prayer and play fosters community. It allows space and time for practicing

discipline, forgiveness, understanding, compassion, service, mutual exhortation and other gospel virtues that encourage and support sanctification and consistent discipleship.

Not all Christians believe they are called to this expression of community. Those that are usually revert to a more conventional home-based life after a while. This kind of community living brings its own pressures, not least, as I have observed it, the ambiguities of responsibility and leadership. Sometimes community living can be confusing and unsettling for children, because there are differences of opinion over the setting of boundaries and expectations. In any case, these expressions of community only involve a small proportion of the total Christian community. The question of how to deliver a genuine sense of belonging to one another at the level of the local church remains an urgent issue.

Mirosław Patalon: Good relationships with other members of the community is crucial. Today people often lack such relationships in the church. The local church is not based on theological beliefs alone anymore, but on relationships between the followers of Jesus. What constitutes a group of believers which can be called a church is the readiness of its members to serve one another. However in spite of all his efforts even Jesus failed to achieve this aim – creating an ideal and already-mature church (at least from a human perspective). That is why the role of the leader or leaders in a congregation is to provide the inclusiveness and acceptance that reflect God's nature.

Brian McLaren: In our conversation around these questions at the conference, the word 'suffering' struck me. As a pastor, I would say that suffering is an essential element of community. I might define Christian community as a group of people willing to suffer together in order to help God's dream for creation come true. God's kingdom – or God's dream for creation – comes through a community that prays, serves, trusts, forgives, persists, proclaims, learns, repents, coheres, gives ... and suffers, because it seems that new life is never born without suffering and death.

Mark Pierson: I would add to what I have said earlier that we need to explore many different models and allow for a variety of levels of community. Time and geographic issues mean that intense involvement in each other's lives will not be an option for most people. Putting a broad umbrella of 'welcome' over groups of people and allowing them to move in and out and around while exploring issues of faith and spirituality will be a vital role for the Church. Lines between those who are 'in' and 'out' will become even more blurred. The scattered community will be as significant as the gathered one, but the former will depend on the existence of the

latter. We already have a substantial community at Cityside in New Zealand who rarely, if ever, attend any activity in our buildings. They consider themselves part of our community, may contribute financially to its life, draw on its resources to fund their spirituality, consider themselves followers of Christ, and keep in touch by email. Someone could argue that this is not a community. If it sustains people in their following of Christ in the world, then I see it as an important part of our ministry.

We can also significantly strengthen our communities of gathered followers by better using the times we do come together during the week. If everything that happens in our worship is led from the front by one or two 'professionals' and all that the congregation gets to do is respond in the appropriate places, community will be very slow to develop. A different understanding of why we come together would enhance the possibility of real community-building taking place.

6. All of us agreed that Christian communities are entrusted with a mandate to bring the good news about the Kingdom of God and the new creation in Christ to those around us. In the context of postmodern realities, should Christian communities seek new understandings and ways of communicating traditional Christian soteriological concerns?

Andrew Kirk: There are, perhaps, three different issues that need to be explored carefully. Firstly, there is the question of the content of the good news of Jesus and the kingdom (Acts 28. 31). The main concern here is to decide to what extent there is a message which transcends all contexts and cultures. Secondly, there is the question of what the implications of the message might be for other claims to offer salvation. This encompasses the notorious choice between exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist options. The third question has to do with the means of communication, such that an understanding of what is being said is made as interesting, relevant and comprehensible as possible.

There is not enough space to explore these questions at all systematically, but an attempt to set out what the issues are may help towards adequate answers. With regard to the content of the gospel, once one recognises that its main thrust is the sheer grace of God towards willful sinners, one also has to allow that what is offered is a pure gift. It is not the result of human imagination, ingenuity, speculation or the projection of some felt need. If it were any of these things, it would not be effective in its own terms. The gospel is a claim that human beings have no resources to effect their own liberation from sin and guilt. If there is not an objective, external source, there is no salvation of this kind. Having said this, there is

a breadth and depth to the message of the gospel such that it would be pretentious to allege that one could capture the whole truth in any particular formula. There are always greater riches to discern. The different circumstances of the recipient of the gospel may help to bring out different facets, like the many sides of a diamond. In this way, different parts of the worldwide Christian community can assist other parts to appreciate more of the nature of God's plan of salvation.

With regard to other religious claims, much has been written. I would like to emphasise the following points. First, the way of salvation proposed in the gospel is incommensurable with any other path proposed, or that could conceivably be proposed. I believe this is mainly a matter of observation. It is born out by the way in which other religions reject the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth for salvation. By and large, if they understand the full implications of the Christian claim, they do not hold to a pluralist belief in many paths. Secondly, a Christian has to claim that Jesus' atoning death is non-negotiable, just in case it is true. For if it is true, there is nowhere else to go. And, if it is not true, then Christian faith ought to be abandoned as a deception, making false allegations. Thirdly, claims about the gospel do not settle the crucial question of what kind of response to God's initiative is necessary for salvation. Most Christians are content to remain agnostic about the actual salvific state of non-Christians (always given the condition that salvation, as described in the gospel, is only through Jesus Christ), on the grounds that to say one can be sure is to arrogate to oneself the position of God. Moreover, the Christian faith has always emphasised that God's common grace is active outside the community joined by faith to Jesus Christ. God has not left himself without a witness in the world. God's Spirit, even apart from a saving relationship to God, inspires people to noble, true thoughts and heroic acts of goodness. However, to understand these as evidence of salvation is to confuse categories, for salvation comes to those who know they have no grounds whatsoever to boast of their wisdom, understanding, ritual acts or virtuous deeds.

The means of communication should be as varied as necessary to secure a hearing from those for whom it is intended. The only restriction on means is that they have to be compatible with the principles of the message itself. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learnt about witness and evangelism is that the personal integrity, or lack of it, of the messenger is the first piece of news that is received. False motives are quickly detected. Of course, there is a tension here, because no-one's life is totally free of all hints of hypocrisy. To wait for a time when our sincerity is completely pure would mean that we would never be in a right state to share a message

which, among other things, speaks of God's free forgiveness and his power to change our lives.

Mirosław Patalon: Yes, of course we need new ways. In the light of previous answers, one of the main purposes in the ministry of Jesus was to re-establish the proper relationship between a person and God. I suggest that in our postmodern world we cannot focus only on the message that Jesus is God, as has sometimes been done. We also need to see the Father as God over all, with the result that salvation is viewed not only as 'washing in the blood of Jesus' but also as coming back to harmony with creation (nature).

Donatas Glodenis: Of course the Christian communities should search for new ways to introduce traditional Christian soteriological concerns. For example, the traditional understanding of atonement arose in particular historical circumstances, having specific features that worked well in the times they were formulated, but don't work nearly as well now. Some ways of articulating Christian beliefs seem to be offensive to postmodern people, suspicious of absolute, non-dialogical authority claims, and authoritarian leadership.

I think the major soteriological issues were very precisely identified during the conference by Brian McLaren, those being atonement, Bible and heaven/hell. I think a good matrix for viewing atonement would be the *Christus Victor* paradigm, though the participatory paradigms are also very helpful in the postmodern context. However, the major problem in Central and Eastern Europe at least, is the way evangelical churches view biblical authority, which is often seen as a sort of combination of civil and criminal codes. Until this changes, the churches will encounter major obstacles in being relevant and understood in society.

Brian McLaren: As I said above, I believe that we must turn increasingly from simple verbal preaching or monologue to image (in art), embodiment (in community and action), and conversation (as neighbours). As well as that, I believe that postmodern Christian communities must be globally and locally aware, and always orientated toward change, realising that we live in a dynamic unfolding story, not a static, rigid state.

A key issue for us is to face the reality of pluralism. Two alternatives are commonly chosen to face modernity: fundamentalism (where our group seeks to defeat all others in logical argument, or by violence) and relativism (where groups minimise their commitments and engage in 'politically correct' dialogue that seems to soften all identities into a kind of bland mush). We need a third alternative, where we engage

in dialogue as committed people with other committed people, remembering the Apostle Peter's wise words, that we 'do it with gentleness and respect'. To communicate our commitment to Christ with gentleness and respect will require us, I think, to do more than say what Jesus (or other biblical speakers/writers) said: we must also say it in the way they said it – with profundity, indirection (as in parables), and example.

7. What is *the* role of Christian communities in the post... world as a whole?

Andrew Kirk: The implication of the question seems to be about how the Christian community responds to the twin issues of pluralism and relativism in contemporary Western society. Following on from the discussion of integrity, the Christian community is called to two main kinds of faithfulness. The first, and overriding one, is fidelity to God's calling. This assumes that amid the cacophony of different voices, God's people can still hear the word of the Lord summoning it to 'make disciples of all nations', 'teach everything commanded by Jesus', 'love God with every part of one's being', and 'love one's neighbour (including one's enemy) as oneself'. Perhaps, the most radical things that the Church can do in a post-modern climate is proclaim that truth is not a fiction and keep alive the memory of God who is the author and measure of all truth. The Christian community has a task to persuade each generation that the inevitable consequence of the loss of God is the loss of the human person.

The second 'faithfulness', consequent upon this, is to our shared humanity with every other human being, irrespective of race, nationality, colour, creed, gender or age. This is a commitment to upholding, in every circumstance, the intrinsic (not dependent upon a particular cultural perspective) dignity and worth of human beings. The implications of this for the Christian community are far-reaching; they are not always obvious, but have to be thought through in widely different situations. I believe it means struggling to maintain the absolute (not relative to time or place) sacredness of life against all forms of abuse and degradation, whether, for example, through abortion on demand, the ravages of poverty, the personal violation of crime, the forcing of children to be soldiers of war, discrimination against women, cultural insensitivity or paternalistic attitudes towards disadvantaged populations. The message of 1 John is serious in this regard: 'let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know we belong to the truth...Whoever does not love does not know God...Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.'

Mirosław Patalon: I see the role as being to provide an example of a loving community, caring not only for those in the church but involved in local communities and showing a practical interest in people's needs while respecting their identity.

Donatas Glodenis: I think the churches should be examples of a different world order, marked by peace and justice, and should strive towards these kinds of ends in the form of involvement in society in the postmodern world. They should be places offering compassion and healing within a caring community, and places where a different God to that of contemporary society is worshipped and where different values are present and expressed through the lives of people. I don't believe communities of that sort are natural in the postmodern context; therefore I would think being such a community in a fractured world would be quite a challenge.

Brian McLaren: I believe that local Christian communities will become more and more important as mass-evangelism, mass-media, impersonal organisations, and other 'disembodied' forms of Christianity lose their appeal. These local faith communities must have three qualities: a genuine spirituality (made visible in human beings whose lives are radiant with the presence of the Holy, in spite of their many failures and weaknesses); an authentic community (where people practice love – through patience, kindness, humility, generosity, etc.); a mission (entering the world and encountering our neighbours with a saving love).

Mark Pierson: The call, as I see it, is to be communities of faithful doubters, not afraid of questions that have no answers or of opinions different to their own, who show by who they are and by their love for one another that following Christ is a reality that puts all other realities into proper perspective.

Parush Parushev: Thank you very much to our conversation partners. If the discernment of the shift to postmodernity – a description of a way of life in a pluralistic world – is right, it presupposes that the Christian believing community is one community among many, and the task is one of modest dialogue in witness rather than that of imposing Christian beliefs as a standard of living for all. It is not a matter of fighting for epistemological monopoly but rather providing an alternative way of life. Acknowledging that in one way or another all forms of life created by God are good, how does Christianity provide a vision for a better life? And so we are back to ethics, concerned with discovering the original meaning of Jesus' teaching, not for the purpose of setting out doctrines alone, but for the purpose of living life as disciples of Jesus.

DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Environment Month

In a previous edition of *The Journal of European Baptist Studies*¹ we outlined our concern for the environment at IBTS and indicated how we hoped to take ideas forward in terms of curriculum development and practical activity. This is by way of a promised progress report.

Twelve months on we can report a range of initiatives in our pursuit of this vision. As we indicated previously, Professor Graham Ashworth, a leading Baptist environmentalist, has become our consultant in these matters and is committed to spending two periods each year at IBTS. We have established a multidisciplinary environment management team of academics, students and staff to look at all aspects of our environmental management, and have had two major initiatives to engage the whole IBTS community in these concerns.

The first of these has been the development of an Environmental Policy for the seminary. The management team looked at policy statements from church bodies, commercial organisations and others before developing our own policy based on our institution mission statement. The policy addresses three areas – the curriculum, the management of our campus and the encouragement and support of good environmental practice in the Prague region and local community.² The policy was adopted by the IBTS Board of Trustees at its November 2002 meeting.

The second major initiative has been the holding of an *Environment Month* involving all the community. This took place in November 2002, with each week having a theme – the environment, tree week, waste week, and energy week. A special introductory session for the whole community was held on the Monday of each week and a specific activity each Wednesday.³ During the month our Certificate students had lectures on the environment and our Applied Theology students had seminars on environmental issues and the theological concepts under-girding our attitude. Our worship too was focused on creation and its redemption. We also looked at possible alternative energy sources. A small team from our Environmental Management group visited the Orthodox Academy at Vilémov, Moravia, which specialises in environmental issues, to look at

¹ Keith G Jones 'Developing the concept of an Eco-Seminary' *JEBS*, Volume Two number 2. January 2002.

² The IBTS Environmental policy can be found at www.ibts.cz/directorate

³ On the IBTS Environmental Policy page on our web site you can see students planting new trees as part of tree week, watched by children of Riverside School, Prague

their solar energy, biomass heating and wind plant. They have agreed to act as consultants in the development at IBTS of alternative energy sources.

The Environment Month has been a great success, alerting the whole community to these important issues. We plan a further event in spring 2003.

Mgr Petra Živnůstková, Kvestor,
and the **Revd Keith G Jones**, Rector,
IBTS

BOOK REVIEW

D W Bebbington (editor)

The Gospel in the World: International Baptist Studies

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Volume 1

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, UK. 2002, 361pp. UK £24.99

This book is a first and a second! It is the first in what promises to be a substantial series on studies in Baptist history and thought, launched by Paternoster Press, with an impressive list of mainly European Baptists scheduled to have books published over the next few years. It is the second collection of papers to be published arising out of a series of International Conferences on Baptist Studies (ICOBBS) held every three years. (The second ICOBBS was held in Wake Forest University, USA in 2000 and the papers from that event are published in *Baptist History and Heritage, Volume XXXVI, Winter/Spring 2001, Numbers 1 and 2*. ICOBBS 1, the papers from which form this book, was held in Regent's Park College, Oxford in 1997. ICOBBS 3 will be at IBTS, Prague, in July 2003.)

Like all such collections of papers delivered at international conferences it is of mixed quality, and different readers will be excited by different topics. On the whole, it is a pleasing collection, at least to this reviewer! The authors are drawn from three continents and a variety of backgrounds, and include IBTS's Senior Research Fellow, Dr Ian Randall. The collection is thus immediately more representative of the world Baptist family than much of the material generally emanating from Baptist publishers in the USA and Great Britain.

Today there is much talk of understanding our context as we do our theologising and engage in our mission. This volume gives us a variety of

insights from the more recent past. So, we explore the contextual theology of the Gaelic hymn-writer Peter Grant in a fascinating piece of work by Donald Meek. Paulu Spanu helps us gain fresh insights into that most interesting of European Baptist communities, the Italian Baptists. Maurice Dowling provides helpful insights into the foundation and subsequent life of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists under the Tsars and in the former USSR. The context of persecution is one which has shaped their theology, but now fresh challenges in ethics have to be faced. Bill Leonard reflects on recent experiences in the Southern Baptist Convention to remind us that we need to apply fresh vigour to the question 'What does it mean to be Baptist?'.

For those who want fresh reflection on some of the thoughts of the great figures of Baptist history, John Coffey helps us look at religious tolerance from Helwys to Leland. The prolific Timothy George examines the limits of Baptist fellowship from Bunyan to Spurgeon, whilst Michael Haykin plunders the Particular Redemption writings of Andrew Fuller.

Of the fifteen chapters (papers) in this book only one is by a woman. Hopefully ICOBS 3 will do something to redress this balance from the heart of Europe where over 70 per cent of our Baptist believers are women. Nevertheless, Nancy Ammerman has a contribution to stimulate us for the future as she asks what we Baptists have to contribute to the post-modern world. She engages with some typical marks of our baptistic experience, but this reviewer was caught by her reminder of our polity, which might enable us to negotiate a post-modern system of connection. This could be exciting. Who will begin real reflection on how 'local bodies of believers that know their need of connection can construct webs of affiliation that enhance and sustain their identity and their ability to do the work of the gospel in the world'? (p. 338) This will be no mean task, but long may these conferences continue if they produce books of this depth and variety.

The Revd Keith G Jones
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